

## THE WATER-WITCH.

[Inter Ocean Trans. from Emile Souvestre.]  
Long ago there lived a young peasant named William, and a pretty young maiden named Bella. They loved each other dearly and would gladly have married, but they were poor and were forced to go out to service for a living.

One day William told Bella that he was going into the wide world on the morrow to see if he could meet with any luck.

Bella wept, and William consoled her as well as he could, promising to return soon.

"Then," said Bella, "since it must be so go in God's name. But first we will share together these valuables which my father left behind him at his death."

She brought from a closet a little bell, a knife and a staff.

"This little bell," said she, "has the gift of notifying by its clear ring the friends of the possessor whenever he is in danger. The knife has the power of freeing from enchantment whatever it touches, and the staff guides one whenever he wishes to go. I will give you the little bell and the knife and the staff I will keep myself."

William thanked her and bade her farewell. Bella looked after him with tearful eyes till he disappeared behind the mountain.

In the course of a few days William came to a town in the vicinity of a lake, where he overheard two ass-drivers talking about the water-witch who lived in the lake.

William inquired who she was, and was told that she was a fairy who was richer than all the kings together. Many people had gone to her abode to get possession of her treasure, but not one had ever returned.

William could not get this story out of his head and he made up his mind to go to the water-witch and see if he could not get enough from her just to buy a cow and a little pig.

When the ass-drivers heard this they cried out with horror and tried to keep him back. But William set off to the lake, and there met a ferryman who took him over to the island.

In the center of the island was a large pond, covered with water lilies in full flower. William walked around the pond and discovered in the rushes a boat in the shape of a sleeping swan with its head under its wing. This William thought very remarkable, and he climbed into the boat in order to examine it. But his feet had no sooner touched the bottom of the boat than the swan seemed to awake, and swam swiftly away from the shore.

William uttered a cry of horror, but the swan swam on. All the young men sprang into the water to make his escape; but the swan drew him down with her to the bottom of the pond.

In this manner he was brought to the dwelling of the water-witch. It was a palace of rare beauty, built entirely of muscle-shell. A crystal staircase led to it, every step of which gave out a musical note as soon as the foot touched it.

The water-witch was reclining on a golden sofa. She was dressed in sea-green silk, her long black hair reached down to her feet, and her face was of that delicate red and white which distinguishes the inner surface of the muscle-shell.

The young man stood entranced by her beauty, but the water-witch rose from her couch and bade him welcome.

She led him into a second apartment which was built entirely of pearl, and she placed before him eight golden beakers, with eight different kinds of wine. Then she showed him her countless treasures, and told him that all the precious things that fell into the sea came into her possession by means of her magical arts.

William was astonished, and he said: "Well, one who is so rich is much to be envied. If I had only a thousandth part of these great riches I should be content."

"Half of them shall be yours if you wish," said the water-witch. "Remain with me; I will be your wife, and you shall be master of all."

The wine was whirling in William's head; he forgot his promise to Bella, and accepted the water-witch's proposal without the least hesitation.

She immediately commenced preparing a delicious repast. She betook herself to a fish-tank in the garden, and called out: "Holla! the Miller! Holla! the Tallow! Holla! the Clerk!" and so on; and at each cry a little fish came swimming toward her, which she caught in a steel net until her net was full. Then she put the fish into a golden pan and began to fry them.

It seemed to William as if he heard the fish sob while they were frying. "What is that sighing in the golden pan?" he asked.

"It is the wood sighing," said the water-witch.

After a while little voices began to whisper. "What is that whispering?" he asked.

"The fat blissing in the pan," she answered.

But now the little voices cried out audibly. "What is that cry?" said William.

"Those are crickets in the hearth," said the water-witch, and she immediately began to sing so loud that he could hear nothing more. She now brought him the fried fish, begged him to eat, and went to fetch twelve different kinds of wine.

William drew his knife from his pocket, and was about to begin; but hardly had he touched the dish than the spell of enchantment was broken, and the fishes rose up and became little men. They all cried out together: "William, save us if you would be saved yourself!"

William was astonished. "Fry, who are the little people?" he cried out.

"We are men like yourself," they answered. "We came here to get rich; but the day after our marriage to the water-witch she changed us into fishes, and threw us into the great tank."

William gave a spring. He seemed to feel himself already frying in the golden pan, and he was fast to make his escape before the water-witch returned. But she met him at the door; she had heard all. She touched him with her wire net, and changed him into a frog and threw him into the tank. At this moment the little bell which he wore on his neck sounded, and Bella heard the sound, though she was far away. She uttered a cry of anguish and said, "William is in danger!"

He put on her shawl and her sun-umbrella at once, hung her little silver cross around her neck, and staff in hand she left the house. She went to a cross roads and there she stuck the staff in the ground and said:

"Little staff, little staff, bear me!  
Little staff, little staff, bear me  
Over stones and stump,  
Over coops and clump,  
Over the river, and over the sea,  
Far away through the air, little staff, carry me!"

Then the staff instantly changed into a saddle-horse, all groomed, saddled and bridled, with a blue plume on its fore head, and a fluttering ribbon behind each ear.

Bella mounted the horse without delay, and he went so swiftly that ditches, trees, and a complete revolution.

"Say, Darringer, have you heard of Bromley's last invention?" "No, I didn't know he had any genius in that way. What has he invented?" "It is just wonderful! It is destined to make a complete revolution."

"Smoke alive, man, what is it?" "A circular saw."

Lightning struck a California pear tree and cooked the fruit brown.

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Cases Whitney's Butter, 10 lb. tin.

10 lb. tins Butter, Pickle Roll.

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